

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3976

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, UK

SUBJECT: CIVAIR - LAKER APPLICATION

REF: STATE 17711

1. UK EMBASSY, WASHINGTON, MINECON CORTAZZI APPROACH (REFTEL) RE SKYTRAIN APPLICATION SEPTEMBER 4 IS ENTIRELY CONSISTENT WITH CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE HMG ATTACHES TO PROJECT. FIVE DIPLOMATIC NOTES PLUS SEPTEMBER 4 DEMARCHE WOULD IN THEMSELVES CONSTITUTE IMPRESSIVE EVIDENCE THAT UKG DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT LENGTHY DELAYS IN GETTING CAB TO CONSIDER LAKER APPLICATION. MATTER HAS BEEN RAISED WITH US ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS (SEE LONDON 6795, 8398 AND 8925) IN TERMS THAT LEAVE US IN LITTLE DOUBT CONCERNING SINCERITY OF BRITISH INTEREST IN SEEING THEIR SKYTRAIN EXPERIMENT IMPLEMENTED. WE ARE TOLD THAT ROGERS (DTI) RAISED LAKER ISSUE DURING HIS WASHINGTON VISIT LAST MONTH AND WE UNDERSTAND APPLICATION HAS BEEN SUBJECT OF AT LEAST ONE TRANS-ATLANTIC TELEPHONE CALL DIRECTLY TO CHAIRMAN CAB FROM CHAIRMAN CAA. WE BELIEVE UK AVIATION AUTHORITIES GENUINELY MEAN IT WHEN THEY SAY THEY WANT SKYTRAIN TESTED IN MARKET PLACE.

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2. WE WANT TO MAKE VERY CLEAR THAT MOOD AMONG UK AVIATION OFFICIALS HERE IS ONE OF ANGER AND GROWING

EXASPERATION OVER TREATMENT THAT HAS BEEN ACCORDED LAKER APPLICATION. THEY ARE SPOHISTICATED ENOUGH TO RECOGNIZE THAT SKYTRAIN PROPOSAL RAISES A NUMBER OF VERY DIFFICULT PROBLEMS FOR US AUTHORITIES BUT THEY NOTE THAT LAKER AIRWAYS WAS DESIGNATED ALMOST SEVEN MONTHS AGO AND OVER NINE MONTHS HAVE ELAPSED SINCE UK FIRST APPROACHED US ABOUT THE PROPOSED LAKER SERVICE AND ONLY NOW ARE THESE PROBLEMS STARTING TO BE CONSIDERED ON THEIR MERITS IN A CAB PROCEEDING. DESPITE OUR PROTESTATIONS TO THE CONTRARY, WIDELY HELD VIEW AMONG MANY UK OFFICIALS IS THAT US HAS BEEN DELIBERATELY DILATORY IN HANDLING LAKER APPLICATION AND THIS HAS LED SOME TO QUESTION OUR GOOD FAITH UNDER TERMS OF BILATERAL WHICH CALLS UPON PARTIES TO ISSUE OPERATING PERMIT TO DESIGNATED AIRLINES "WITHOUT UNDUE DELAY."

3. IN OUR VIEW, HANDLING OF SKYTRAIN HAS BEEN SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT IRRITANT ADVERSELY AFFECTING GENERAL CLIMATE OF OUR BILATERAL AVIATION RELATIONSHIP. AT THIS STATE, GIVEN COMPLEXITY OF ISSUES LAKER APPLICATION RAISES, IT MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE TO DO MUCH TO EXPEDITE CAB HEARING PROCESS. NEVERTHELESS, WE BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT THAT US BEAR IN MIND SKYTRAIN WILL CONTINUE TO COLOR BILATERAL AVIATION RELATIONS DURING CAB PROCEEDINGS AND WE SHOULD NOT BE TOO SURPRISED IF WE FIND UK GENERALLY UNHELPFUL IN RESOLVING OTHER AVIATION PROBLEMS WHILE LAKER APPLICATION IS AT ISSUE.

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